



Cold Stress Injury Prevention

How to Prevent Injury in Adverse Cold Conditions

What is the Problem?

People who work in cold environments or are exposed to extreme cold may be at risk of cold stress.¹ Whenever temperatures drop decidedly below normal and wind speed increases, heat can more rapidly leave your body, which may cause serious health problems.² Extremely cold or wet weather is a dangerous situation that can cause occupational illness and injuries such as hypothermia, frostbite, trench foot and chilblains.³



Who is at Risk?

Extreme cold weather is a dangerous situation that can bring on health emergencies in susceptible people, such as those without shelter, outdoor workers, and those who work in an area that is poorly insulated or without heat.⁴

Prevention Tips

Cold stress is, for the most part, a preventable public health problem. Reduce your risk and help treat symptoms of cold stress by taking the following steps:

- Always wear protective clothing and protect the extremities when experiencing cold⁵
- If suffering from cold stress move into a warm room or shelter.⁶
- Remove any wet clothing or clothing near the injured area.⁷
- Alert the supervisor and request medical assistance if necessary.⁸
- If victim has no pulse, begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).⁹
- Warm the center of their body first - chest, neck, head, and groin - using an electric blanket, if available; or use skin-to-skin contact under loose, dry layers of blankets, clothing, towels, or sheets.¹⁰
- After their body temperature has increased, keep dry and wrapped in a warm blanket, including the head and neck.¹¹



Plan of the Week (POW):

Hypothermia, cold water immersion, frostbite, trench foot, chilblains are all possible results of cold water immersion or extensive cold exposure.¹² **ALWAYS** wear protective clothing and bring extra clothing in case of emergency. Know the appropriate resources (first aid, 911, park services) depending on your situation. Stay calm and make sure someone who has cold stress begins to warm in order to reduce the risk of injury and possible death.¹³ NEVER touch cold metal surfaces with bare skin and try to rotate the amount of time spent in cold with a warm location to maintain appropriate body temperature.¹⁴

References

- 1, 2, 6-11 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Cold Stress.
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/coldstress/>. Updated 11 July 2013.
Accessed 2 September 2013.
- 3-5, 12-14 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). NIOSH fast facts: protecting
yourself from cold stress. DHHS –NIOSH (Publication No. 2010-115).
www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/outdoor/. Accessed 2 September 2013.

NMCPHC Injury Prevention and Violence Free Living Webpage

<http://www.med.navy.mil/sites/nmcphc/health-promotion/injury-violence-free-living/Pages/injury-violence-free-living.aspx>

Add Local Information/Logos Here